



## 3/1 Marines pay respect to 9-11 victims

**Cpl. Randy L. Bernard**  
*1st Marine Division*

FALLUJAH, Iraq -- Although it has been years since the Twin Towers in New York City fell, the Marines fighting insurgency within the city of Fallujah do so because they remember the terrible actions against their home.

These Marines got the chance to show their respect to not only those killed in New York, but also their fellow Marines who fell during the attack on terrorism in Fallujah with a flag raising ceremony Jan. 16.

"We had the privilege of bringing a group of flags: our national colors, the New York State flag, the New York Police Department flag, and a World Trade Center flag on tour through the city of Fallujah to our rifle companies in Third battalion," said Lt. Col. Willy A. Buhl, battalion commander for 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment.



*Cpl. Randy L. Bernard*

An American flag that was once flown over ground-zero in New York City flew in a ceremony in Fallujah. The event was held to remember those who lost their lives in terrorist attacks on 9-11 and those service members who sacrificed their lives to bring justice to the people responsible.

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## ***Iraqi, Marine forces capture 15 insurgents***

**Compiled by the  
24th Marine Expeditionary Unit  
Public Affairs Office**

FORWARD OPERATING BASE KALSU, Iraq -- Iraqi Security Forces and U.S. Marines rounded up 15 suspected insurgents south of Baghdad today, beginning a fresh offensive aimed at disrupting insurgent activity ahead of national elections later this month.

Operation Checkmate kicked

off with a pre-dawn raid near Jabbella, about 50 miles south of the capital. Six CH-46E Sea Knight helicopters ferrying the joint strike force -- composed of elements of the Iraqi S.W.A.T. team, the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit's Force Reconnaissance platoon and U.S. Army troops -- swarmed the target, a crop of houses believed to shelter a number of militants and a

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## Detainee, from Page 1

stockpile of weapons and munitions.

Of two dozen military-age men initially questioned, 15 were detained, including a suspected former intelligence officer in Saddam Hussein's regime.

The raid force, joined by an additional team of Marines called in to assist in the search, also uncovered a small weapons cache, including 11 rifles and shotguns and 1,500 rounds of ammunition.

In the coming days, more such raids are planned, as intelligence gleaned from one mission drives follow-on operations.

Despite a recent drop in insurgent activity in the area, the commander of pro-Iraqi forces in northern Babil Province said he has no intention of letting local militants regroup.

"When we have an enemy on the run, especially a determined one, we can't afford to stand around admiring our progress," said Col. Ronald J. Johnson, 24th MEU's commanding officer. "We have to stay in the attack."

Johnson said Iraqi forces will take the lead in providing security during the upcoming elections.

"We have worked with our Iraqi partners to put together a solid plan," he said. "The Iraqis will be in front, confident and aggressive. We will be in support, ready to reinforce; and the Iraqi people will get the best opportunity possible to vote in a real election for the first time in their lives."



*Cpl. Sarah A. Beavers*

Marines from the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit escort detainees back to a vehicle after capturing them during a raid in Jabella, Iraq, Jan. 19. Six CH-46E Sea Knight helicopters ferrying a joint strike force -- composed of elements of the Iraqi S.W.A.T. team, the 24th MEU's Force Reconnaissance platoon and U.S. Army troops -- swarmed the target, a crop of houses believed to shelter a number of militants and a stockpile of weapons and munitions. The raid kicked off Operation Checkmate, a fresh offensive aimed at disrupting insurgent activity ahead of national elections later this month.

## Notes and asides

### **Camp Fallujah**

#### **Anabolic Steroid Control Act of 1990**

A change has been implemented into the Anabolic Steroid Control Act of 1990, effective tomorrow, according to MARADMIN 011/05.

The new Anabolic Steroid Control Act of 2004 amends the definition of "anabolic steroid"

to include Tetrahydrogestrinone (THG), Androstenedione and specific related chemicals used to promote muscle growth. Specifically, Androstenedione or any "Andro-containing substance, a steroid precursor, will now be listed as a Schedule Three controlled substance. Article 112A, UCMJ, makes wrongful use, possession, manufacture, distribution,

import or introduction on an installation, vessel, vehicle or aircraft used by or under the control of the Armed Forces, of all drugs on Schedules 1-5 illegal.

Over-the-counter sales of anabolic steroids on Marine Corps installations is prohibited.

Commands having individuals identified as abusers of anabolic

steroids shall take appropriate action and if appropriate, initiate disciplinary action and process for separation.

#### **Chow Hall**

No bags or backpacks are allowed in the the chow hall or within the chow hall vicinity.

For more information call MHG S-4 at 3401-706.



## NCO on misfortune: "It's my fault"

**Sgt. Robert M. Storm**  
*Marine Corps Base*

It's not my fault. I didn't know. Nobody told me. Nobody called me back. I never got the e-mail.

How many times have we heard or even made these statements? Nobody wants to accept responsibility anymore for their actions or the actions of those around them.

To me, blame is a very simple thing to figure out. If you could have affected the outcome of a situation in a reasonable way, then you are responsible for the ending. Remember, when you say "it's not my fault" you're claiming that you are a leaf floating in the middle of a river, with no control over your destination.

For example, if a bus hits you as you're crossing the street, is it your fault? Did you look before you moved? If you did, you should have seen the 10,000-pound vehicle moving at a high rate of speed. You could have affected the outcome in a reasonable way, whether the bus driver was at fault or not. You can complain all you want to God that it wasn't your fault but you'll still be dead. So part of the blame is yours.

However, if a plane hits you as you leave your house, is that your fault? It's not really reasonable to expect or even watch for a plane crashing into you. You can always say, what if I had left earlier/later, but that's fate, not personal influence.

My personal example of blame happened about an hour before I wrote this commentary. I was selected by my battalion to compete for the noncommissioned officer of the quarter for Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton. I was informed Oct. 14 at 8:30 a.m. that the board was to take place at 9 a.m. that same day, and to wear my Service C uniform. My uniform was at home, which is 30 minutes away from the office. So, I reported to the board in my cammie uniform and was promptly told to go back to work and that I wouldn't get a chance to compete.

I went and informed my chain of command and everyone got upset. Where was the breakdown in communication? Why weren't we informed of the time beforehand? Who dropped the ball?

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### **Scout (FORWARD)**

**I Marine Expeditionary Force**

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## Scouting Around (Forward)

**Who do you think is going to win the Super Bowl?**



**Cpl. Matt Scarborough**  
**Weapons Co., 3/5**

"Atlanta will win because of Michael Vick."



**2nd Lt. James C. Collins**  
**Bravo Co., 1/8**

"The Falcons and the score is going to be 21-14."



**HN Joseph Gagucas**  
**Kilo Co., 3/5**

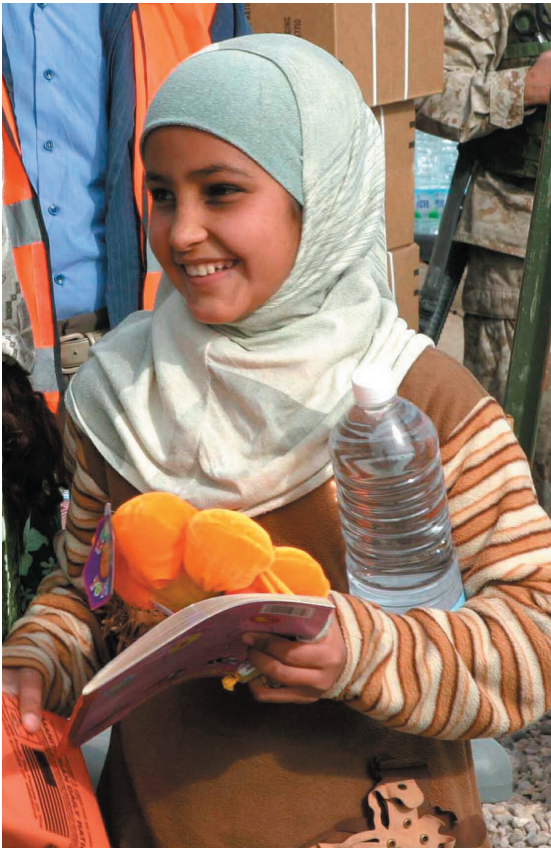
"The Steelers because Jerome Bettis is a Notre Dame-ordained powerhouse."

# Fallujah districts are now open

**Cpl. K. T. Tran**

*1st Marine Expeditionary Force*

FALLUJAH, Iraq -- The Interim Iraqi Government (IIG) directed that Fallujah be reopened on a district by district basis, to citizens on Dec. 23. Assisted by Iraqi and U.S. forces, the city successfully opened all 18 districts on Jan 14. Security was paramount as five entry control points and curfews were established to ensure safety of its citizens. As of Jan. 19, more than 170,000 residents returned.



*Lance Cpl. Daniel J. Klein*

A local Iraqi girl receives food and water at one of three Humanitarian Assistance sites in Fallujah. More than 87,600 returning residents have visited the HA sites.



*Maj. Brent P. Christie*

Women returning to Fallujah wait in line to be searched by female Marines, an initiative that enhances security and respects Iraqi customs and courtesies. Colonel Michael A. Shupp, Commanding Officer of Regimental Combat Team-1 observes the area's security procedures.



*Maj. Brent P. Christie*

A simple security measure, the Biometric Automated Toolset (BAT) system is used to collect iris scans and fingerprints of military aged males entering the city of Fallujah. The measure is conducted by U.S. Forces.



# Ambulance drivers cut critical minutes, save lives

**Lance Cpl. T. J. Kaemmerer**  
*1st Force Service Support Group*

CAMP TAQADDUM, Iraq -- Lance Cpl. Hector Dominguez, Jr., heard he was going to Iraq as a Medical Battalion truck driver, and began envisioning long convoys and providing security for Navy corpsmen along the dangerous Iraqi roads.

He never imagined he'd find himself behind the wheel of a Humvee-turned-ambulance rushing to save a Marine's life, but that's exactly what he wakes up to do every morning here.

Dominguez starts work everyday at 7:30 a.m., when he begins taking phone calls in the Surgical/Shock Trauma Platoon's command operations center and sends out patient reports to units that need the information.

Administrative work takes a rear seat, once one of the phone calls gives him an estimated time of arrival for a helicopter coming in with an injured Marine, Sailor or Soldier.

"Once the call comes in with the ETA (estimated time of arrival) for a bird (helicopter), we load the Humvee, grab a corpsman and go to the flight line to wait for the bird to land," said the 19-year-old McAllen, Texas, native. "It takes less than a minute to get to the flight line. It depends on the patient, but normally it takes less than four minutes to load them up and get them back here (S/STP)."

Operation Al Fajr kept the Marines extremely busy and pushed the ambulances to their limits. There were mass casualties picked up daily, most with about eight patients, said Dominguez.

"Lately we haven't had too many patients to pick up, and that's definitely a good thing," said Dominguez. "Some days we'll get three or four a day, though."

During the Fallujah operation, the Marines and sailors did everything they could to help the injured troops coming in, fresh from the hellish city streets.

"During (Operation Al Fajr) everyone was where they needed to be," explained Dominguez. "We got the patients in and out as quickly as possible, trying to save their lives."

Unfortunately, there are also times when the patient is already too far gone, and the ambulances can't go fast enough to get them to the S/STP in time for the doctors there to save them.

"I've lost a couple patients en route," said Domin-



*Lance Cpl. T. J. Kaemmerer*

Lance Cpl. Aaron Garza starts his ambulance as he prepares to retrieve patients from helicopters at the flight line, Jan. 11.

guez, as he recalled one instance. "One guy just stopped breathing on the way here. The doc was in the back (administering) CPR. That's one of the worst feelings you can ever have. You think 'maybe if I had done something a little faster, that guy would still be alive.'"

The doctors and corpsmen of the S/STP try to keep morale high, even when there is an unpreventable death, by telling the Marines how they do an outstanding job here.

When the ambulance drivers get a little down time, many of them can be found playing video games or taking part in other recreational activities, which helps to pass the long Iraqi days.

That down time, however, all depends on the operational tempo of all the other units working in Iraq.

"We can't live without (ambulance drivers) out here. They're really invaluable," said Long Island, N.Y., native Cmdr. Dave A. Tanen, the officer in charge of Shock Trauma Platoon 2.

The Marines know that the quicker they get patients to the doctors and corpsmen of the S/STP, the easier it is for the docs to save their brothers-in-arms. It's that knowledge that makes them strive to be faster and better at what they do.

"There were many times during (Operation Al Fajr) when I was told that if I had got the patient there just two minutes later he would have been gone," explained Dominguez. "Just knowing that you helped someone out in a life or death situation, it's a great feeling."

## 9-11, from Page 1

"We want to connect with the folks back home in any way that we can. These flags were sent to us in an effort to connect with the Marines and Sailors forward deployed out here," said the 42-year-old native of Los Gatos, Calif. "The flags had been flown at ground zero at the site of the attack on 9-11. The New York City chief of police actually sent them to us with the request that they be flown in the city of Fallujah for the folks back home, and for us."

The four flags were taken into the city, where the battalion's rifle companies have established firm bases, so that the Marines could pay tribute to the lives lost at the cost of freedom.

"I think that every Marine feels something special when they see our national colors. Many of (the Marines) are on duty because of the events on 9-11," said Buhl. "I don't think that there was a man today that didn't have an emotional feeling inside, especially after all we have done here in Iraq over the last seven months, and after all of the men who have made and continue to make the ultimate sacrifice here to defend our freedoms."

The national colors were presented to the companies like the famous image of Marines raising the flag atop Mt. Suribachi on Iwo Jima during World War II.

"That is maybe the most famous symbol of military excellence, and it represents all the sacrifice of all Marines since the beginning of our Corps and ensures that we enjoy the blessings of liberty in our great nation," said Buhl. "That image is going to be famous until the end of time."

Among the battalion's Marines, those that were residents of New York felt a special pride in the ceremony.

"I feel proud and privileged that we had the opportu-

nity to pay our respects to the people who suffered the most from the tragedy of 9-11," said Staff Sgt. John P. Saul, a platoon sergeant with Company K, 3/5 and a 27-year-old native of Niagara Falls, N.Y. "And also to let the people of New York know that we are still out here continuing to fight the individuals that caused that tragedy to happen."

Though Buhl was raised in northern California, he was born in New York, and shares a bond with his roots.

"I was honored to receive a letter from someone as senior as the chief of New York police, but on a personal level, unlike a lot of the tours and things that we do over here, this was just for the folks back home," said Buhl. "I feel honored and privileged to support the people of New York and our great nation."



*Cpl. Randy L. Bernard*

Marines of Company I, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment mount an American flag to a make-shift flagpole in preparation for a ceremony to honor those people lost in the attacks of September 11, 2001, paying tribute to their fallen brothers in arms.

## Commentary, from Page 3

Quite bluntly, I did.

Can I say that I had so little control of my life and events around me that I could not have affected the outcome of this situation? No, I can't. Whether my command forgot to tell me is irrelevant. I refuse to believe that I have so little impact on my own life. I refuse to be a leaf. I was chosen because I was the most

outstanding NCO in my battalion. I've been on this board the last three quarters and running. I'm a sergeant, and I know from previous experience what uniform I'll have to wear, and I knew that I would represent my battalion sometime in the near future. Could I have checked with my chain of command every day? Yes. Could I have kept my uniforms neatly in my truck instead of the office or have found a locker to keep

them in? Yes. Would this have taken initiative? Yes. Would this initiative be expected from someone who is being selected as NCO of the quarter? I certainly hope so.

My chain of command has come to me and told me they will get to the bottom of the situation to find out who is at fault.

They're too late. I already know whose fault it is.

Mine.



# 120th engineer Soldiers shelter Marines in Iraq

**Sgt. Enrique S. Diaz**

*1st Force Service Support Group*

CAMP TAQADDUM, Iraq -- A group of Soldiers here are making the cold season - and life in general - a little easier on the Marines and Sailors of the 1st Force Service Support Group.

The 120th Engineer Combat Battalion, a National Guard unit from Oklahoma, is building Southwest Asia huts, known as SWA huts, for the Marines and Sailors who live and work aboard the camp. A total of 112 of the shelters have been erected, with another 10 being completed within a week to replace a city of tents.

The wooden huts are designed to keep Marines cooler when Iraq's temperatures reach up to 130 degrees and warmer during the winter nights of 30 degrees.

The walls of the SWA huts comprise of two-inch layer of Styrofoam within each wall and another two-inch thick



*Sgt. Enrique S. Diaz*

Sgt. Garrett E. Duke, a 27-year-old Okemah, Okla., native, saws wood that will be used for paneling in a Southwest Asia hut at Camp Taqaddum, Iraq, Jan. 11. Duke is a carpenter with the 120th Engineer Combat Battalion, a National Guard unit from Oklahoma that has built 122 of the huts for Marines based at Camp Taqaddum, Iraq to live in.



*Sgt. Enrique S. Diaz*

Army Staff Sgt. Eric L. Wilson, a 34-year-old Okemah, Okla., native, hammers a threshold into place for a door on a Southwest Asia hut at Camp Taqaddum, Iraq, Jan. 11.

layer of insulation along the sheet metal ceiling to trap in heat during the winter and keep it out during the summer.

Aside from the added comfort, the huts will also be replacing tents that are nearing the end of their serviceability.

"The tents have been here for over two summers and are starting to deteriorate because of the sun, which affects everything out here," said Army 1st Lt. Aaron T. Corbett, a 27-year-old Oklahoma City, Okla., native and officer-in-charge of the SWA hut project.

"It just makes life a little bit more comfortable here in Iraq," said Corbett.

Although the new huts offer Marines here more comfortable and protective living quarters, they provide less space than the tents.

The width of the huts are 16 feet, two feet less than the tents.

Despite the smaller living space, the huts do not have center beams like the tents, so more room can be used to arrange beds, furniture and personal belongings.

Aside from the compromise in space, Marines appreciate the benefits the huts provide.

"It does stay warmer, you don't have to tighten them (tents are anchored with ropes that often loosen themselves), and SWA huts are easier to clean," said Lance Cpl. Brian T. Due, a 23-year-old Long Island, N.Y., native.

The wooden huts offer better protection against the rain and other elements as well, said Corbett.

Construction of the SWA huts is one of the final projects for the 120th's engineers. The unit will return to the U.S. in several weeks, ending their one year tour in Iraq.

# VMA-311 maintenance: blood and bones of Harrier

**Cpl. Joel A. Chaverri**  
*3rd Marine Aircraft Wing*

AL ASAD, Iraq -- The Marine Corps AV-8B Harrier II, with its powerful appearance, can give the impression of being nearly indestructible. But like every jet, it needs to be maintained.

Airframe maintenance Marines with Marine Attack Squadron 311, Marine Aircraft Group 16, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, have a huge responsibility of ensuring the overall integrity of the vertical take off attack fighter.

"Airframe maintenance works mainly on the external body and hydraulics of the plane," said Staff Sgt. Michael F. Gladden, staff noncommissioned officer-in-charge. "We have to make sure the aircraft is structurally sound and that the hydraulics systems don't have any leaks."

To ensure a structurally sound aircraft, airframes Marines must pay close attention to the little problems and taking every situation seriously.

"We usually find out about a problem with the aircraft when the pilot has a 'gripe,' or the systems register a malfunction," said Gladden, a 30-year-old native of Camden, S.C. "When that happens, our troubleshooters go in and find the problem."

Working on a section of flight line, troubleshooters attempt to locate the exact source of the fault, narrowing it down as much as possible to fix the problem.

"It definitely is a lot of responsibility," said Cpl. Brandon A. Rovell, airframe mechanic. "The safety of the pilots is in our hands."

If there is a problem on the aircraft it is safely pulled off the line until it is fixed.



*Cpl. Joel A. Chaverri*

Cpl. John R. Lacey, 21-year-old native of Kennewick, Wash., and collateral duty inspector with Marine Attack Squadron 311, Marine Aircraft Group 16, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, Al Asad, Iraq, adjusts a part on the AV-8B Harrier II during repairs.

"We're pretty good at finding the problem," said Cpl. John R. Lacey, collateral duty inspector. "There hasn't been anything yet we couldn't fix."

Sitting on top of the Harrier with a wrench in hand, Lacey has the responsibility of checking over the aircraft before it's approved to return to flight.

"I'm one of the last set of eyes on the jet before it goes up (in the air)," said the 21-year-old native of Kennewick, Wash. "If something goes wrong, the responsibility is all on me."

Even with such a heavy responsibility, Lacey seems relaxed as he looks over the multi-million dollar jet.

"I'm pretty confident in myself and my team. We check and double check the problem," said Lacey. "After that, it's only a matter of time until we fix it."

Airframe mechanics agree that time can become the biggest chal-

lenge while working on an aircraft.

"There are a lot of process involved, said Lacey. "There are high standards and we need to make sure we get it right."

"Sometimes we'll need to order a part, but it'll take weeks to get here, said Rovell, a 25-year-old native of Chicago. "It can become pretty frustrating."

All the motivation only serves to improve performance, and keep the minds focused on the real importance of their jobs.

"You have to realize that everything is attached to the airframe," said Cpl. Jacob A. Harrington, quality assurance representative, and 22-year-old native of Toledo, Ore. "Bombs, electronics, engine, seats, everything is attached to the frame. Since we take care of the exterior, and the hydraulics, we are the blood and bones of the aircraft. Nothing runs without us."